

*The McKinney-Vento Act,
part of the federal No Child Left
Behind Act of 2001, guarantees
homeless children and youth
an education.*

Educating Missouri's Homeless Children

Missouri Department
of Elementary and
Secondary Education

D. Kent King, Commissioner of Education



Homeless definition

Legally, homeless is defined as someone who does not have a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence; and/or has a primary nighttime residence that is:

- A supervised public or private shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations (including welfare hotels, congregate shelters and transitional housing for the mentally ill);
- A public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for people (including cars, campgrounds, motels and other temporary places);
- A doubled-up accommodation (including sharing housing with others due to loss of own housing).

The homeless may also include children or youth who have run away from home because they are unsafe (physically or emotionally) or because parents have told them that they may no longer live at home.

School selection process

The homeless child shall be immediately enrolled (attending classes and participating fully) in school during the school selection process.

It is the responsibility of personnel from the local education agency (usually the homeless coordinator) where the child is physically residing to make the decision about the best school for each homeless child.

In determining the best interests of the child, the local educational agency shall comply, to the extent feasible, with the request made by the parent or caretaker regarding school selection.

During the selection process for the best school, it may be helpful for the following individuals to be involved:

- The homeless child
- Parents or caretakers of the homeless child
- Shelter personnel
- Representatives of social service agencies
- Homeless coordinators from involved school districts
- School social worker
- School counselor
- Anyone else who can speak in the best interest of the child (IEP staff, teachers, etc.)

If the school of best interest is different than the parent's choice, the school has to notify the parent in writing of the decision and the reason and give the parent a copy of the federal complaint procedure.

Factors for school selection

- Special needs for the homeless child
 - Continuity of instruction
 - Length of stay in the homeless family's new location to encourage retention
 - Time and distance to transport the child to and from school
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Documents needed to enroll

- Immunization Record (within 24 hours)
 - Completed Enrollment Form (upon enrollment)
 - Verification of homeless status or proof of residency (letter on shelter letterhead, verification from school district homeless coordinator, etc.)
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Transportation to school

The school district in which the homeless child or youth is physically residing and the attendance district are responsible for providing transportation to the selected school. They split the cost equally.

Reimbursement for transportation expenses is available when the district is not already receiving a Homeless Grant from the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Only public school districts can apply for transportation reimbursement funds.

Local coordinator

In accordance with the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, every school district must designate a board-approved Homeless Coordinator. This person will work with homeless families to assure that children and youth have the best opportunities to continue their education. Local coordinators also will make sure that homeless children and youth are enrolled in any special programs for which they qualify, that records of homeless children are transferred in a timely manner, and that enrollment takes place as soon as possible. The coordinator responsibilities are specifically stated in the NCLB Act. For more information, visit our Web site at <http://dese.mo.gov/divimprove/fedprog/discretionarygrants/homeless>.

Dispute resolution

If a conflict arises about the enrollment or placement of a homeless child or youth that cannot be resolved at the local level, intervention may be provided by personnel from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Questions about this process may be directed to Missouri's Homeless Coordinator at 573-522-8763.

Available resources

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education provides the following resources on their Web site at <http://dese.mo.gov/divimprove/fedprog/discretionarygrants/homeless>.

- McKinney-Vento Legislation
- Homeless Coordinator Directory
- Standard Complaint Procedure
- Training Tips and Ideas for Staff
- MSIP Homeless Standards
- Sample Enrollment Form
- Transportation
- General Information for Schools
- Web Resources



Missouri's Homeless Coordinator: 573-522-8763

**Missouri Department of Elementary
and Secondary Education**
Federal Discretionary Grants
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The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, sex or disability in its programs, services or employment practices. Anyone who requires auxiliary aids or services in connection with this program should call 573-751-2046. (RELAY in Missouri: 1-800-735-2966 TDD)

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